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RUEHHS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP/ISA/AP//
RHMFISS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC//J2/J3/J5//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-3//
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J2/J3/J5//
RHEFAFM/DIRAFMIC FT DETRICK MD//MA-1A//
RUEHSUN/USUN ROME IT

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001841

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, INR, OES/STC, OES/IHA, MED
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH
STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (WSTIEGER/LVALDEZ/DMILLER/CHICKEY)
BANGKOK FOR USAID (OCARDUNER, JMACARTHUR, WBRADY)
BANGKOK FOR APHIS (NCARDENAS), REO(JWALLER)
BEIJING FOR HHS HEALTH ATTACHE (BROSS)
CDC FOR COGH (SBLOUT) AND MCOHEN/RJSIMONDS/NCOX/TSINKS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (STERN)
HHS PASS TO FIC/NIH (RGLASS) AND FDA (MPLAISER)
PHNOM PENH FOR CDC INFLUENZA COORDINATOR(WBRADY)
ROME FOR FAO
USDA PASS TO APHIS, FAS (OSTA AND OCRA), FSIS
VIENTIANE FOR CDC INFLUENZA COORDINATOR (ACORWIN)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PROP](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [EAID](#) [KHIV](#) [KFLU](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MICHALAK AND NEW VIETNAMESE MINISTER OF HEALTH
REVIEW COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

HANOI 00001841 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (U) Summary: On October 25, Ambassador Michalak paid an introductory call on the new Minister of Health, Nguyen Quoc Trieu. After reviewing Trieu's strong political experience and connections, the Ambassador noted leading USG health cooperation priorities, particularly medication assisted therapy for intravenous drug users to prevent HIV infection and avian and pandemic influenza preparedness. Trieu stressed long-term objectives such as health financing goals and the development of a private health sector, along with short-term goals for infectious disease prevention, food safety, and the need for investment in hospitals and training investment. Trieu sought increased U.S. assistance to support Vietnamese food safety efforts and requested U.S. and NGO support for the construction of increased hospital capacity. End Summary.

Minister Trieu's Background

¶2. (SBU) Though Trieu has a medical degree and significant health care experience, he has spent much of his professional life outside of the health arena. He obtained a doctorate of philosophy in "socio-politics" in Moscow and just finished his term as Chair of the Hanoi People's Committee. Though he referred to himself colloquially as the "Mayor of Hanoi," Trieu defended his medical credentials. The Ambassador noted the value of Trieu's non-medical experience in tackling the current problems of the Ministry of Health (MOH). The Minister is a member of the Communist Party and has visited the United States several times.

HIV and PEPFAR

¶3. (SBU) After introducing the comprehensive U.S.-supported HIV/AIDS programs under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Ambassador focused on medication assisted therapy (MAT), including the use of methadone, and highlighted the delayed initiation of a PEPFAR-sponsored pilot program. Trieu made little reference to HIV/AIDS or to PEPFAR programs other than to state that "Vietnam is appreciative of PEPFAR and Clinton Foundation support," lumping together these two disparate efforts. The Ambassador suggested that the U.S. Health Attache return to introduce the newly arrived PEPFAR Coordinator, Jim Sarns, to Vice Minister Trinh Quan Huan at an early date.

Public Health Issues

¶4. (U) The Ambassador praised the Government of Vietnam's (GVN) efforts to respond to and prepare for avian and pandemic influenza, indicating that Vietnam has instituted a model approach worthy of global attention, founded on partnership and information and sample sharing. As an example of broad-based contribution to the development of public health capacity, the Ambassador pointed to the start of the World Health Organization Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) with the MOH's Vietnam Administration of Preventive Medicine department, which receives USAID and AusAID funding and CDC technical assistance. Trieu broadly addressed avian influenza several times by pointing to the MOH priority to prepare for "natural disasters and epidemics," including severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and avian influenza.

Minister Trieu's First 85 Days

¶5. (SBU) Trieu detailed three accomplishments from his first 85 days in office. First, he secured approval from the National Assembly to

HANOI 00001841 002.2 OF 002

issue government bonds valued at 5000 billion Vietnamese dong (VND)(approximately USD 310 million) to upgrade 387 of Vietnam's 659 district hospitals by 2009. Second, the Vietnam Development and Investment Bank committed to provide 1600 billion VND (approximately USD 100 million) in soft loans to upgrade central and national hospitals. Finally, Trieu has begun to address the tremendous need for human resource development and asked for U.S. NGO-based resources to support medical training. The Ambassador pointed out the experience and capacity of U.S. companies to provide technical assistance in the areas of medical equipment and hospital management.

The Minister's Platform

¶6. (SBU) Trieu described two long-term priorities: health care financing and development of the private health care sector. Trieu acknowledged the limits of the GVN overall national budget, which currently appropriates 8 USD per citizen on health care (6.2 percent of the total national budget), and Vietnam's poor ranking by the World Health Organization (187 out of 190 nations) national investment in health. With poor domestic investment, Trieu recognized the concordant dependency of many health care programs on international donor and project support. Further, he referenced the need to "mobilize the non-public" sector by providing "encouragement through the creation of favorable conditions for private providers." Despite listing private health care financing and development as priorities, the Minister offered no proposed initiative or solutions. In contrast to the priorities of his predecessor, Trieu did not mention public health function specifically and strategies that target the poor.

¶7. (SBU) Trieu stressed three short-term priorities, including the prevention of epidemic infectious diseases such as SARS and avian influenza, improved food safety controls, requesting U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) assistance for the latter. The Ambassador raised the possibility of enhanced future cooperation in food safety.

Comment

18. (SBU) As expected, Trieu focused on the prevention and control of infectious epidemics. Trieu's appeal for U.S. food safety assistance follows a detailed request recently submitted to the Embassy by the MOH Food Administration Department. This week, Prime Minister Dung highlighted food safety issues in his recent annual address to the National Assembly, reflecting the growing importance the GVN places on this issue. Though lumping PEPFAR and Clinton Foundation support together might indicate insufficient understanding of HIV coordination, more likely it reflects that Trieu is still working his way up the learning curve in his new position. We welcome Trieu's focus on health financing, but await more concrete proposals. The Ambassador concluded with "USG health developments efforts must contribute to general strengthening of the health system." End comment.

MICHALAK